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Human Rights Office
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FILE -

COMMENTS:

"This interview was split & part one prepared in a second
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Argentina

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TAGS: SOPN AR
SUBJECT: GENTE MAGAZINE INTERVIEW WITH EX AMBASSADOR HILL

POPULAR WEEKLY MAGAZINE GENTE (393,000 CIRCULATION) IN JULY 7 ISSUE SPLASHES FOUR-PAGE INTERVIEW BY ITS U.S. CORRESPONDENT ALBERTO OLIVA WITH EX AMBASSADOR TO BUENOS AIRES ROBERT C. HILL AT HIS NEW HAMPSHIRE HOME. STORY INCLUDES QUESTIONS SUBMITTED TO HILL BY THE MAGAZINE BEFORE HIS DEPARTURE FROM ARGENTINA. PIECE OPENS WITH FULL, TWO-PAGE PHOTO OF HILL AT HOME SITTING NEAR AUTOGRAPHED PHOTO OF PRESIDENT VIDELA. CAPTION READS "ROBERT HILL, BACK IN THE U.S., TALKS ABOUT ARGENTINA WITH ADMIRATION. HE HAS MANY MEMENTOS, AMONG THEM AN AUTOGRAPHED PHOTOGRAPH OF PRESIDENT VIDELA. HIS SONS WILL REMAIN HERE TO LIVE."

INTRODUCTORY QUOTE SAID: "AM AS ARGENTINE AND LOVE YOUR COUNTRY AS MUCH AS YOU ALL." INTRO CONTINUES, "AFTER 34 YEARS WORKING FOR THE U.S. FOREIGN SERVICE, HILL RESIGNED AS AMBASSADOR TO ARGENTINA AND ASKED FOR HIS RETIREMENT AS WELL.

REASON: DISAGREEMENT WITH PRESIDENT CARTER'S FOREIGN POLICY. "I ESPECIALLY DISSENT FROM HIS FOCUS ON THE PROBLEM OF HUMAN RIGHTS," HE SAID.

FOLLOWING ARE SIGNIFICANT EXCERPTS FROM THE INTERVIEW.

EXPLAINING THE CIRCUMSTANCES OF HIS RESIGNATION, HILL SAID THAT HE TOLD PATRICIA DERIAN DURING HER VISIT TO BUENOS AIRES THAT HE DID NOT WISH TO CONTINUE AS U.S. AMBASSADOR TO ARGENTINA BECAUSE "I COULD NOT CARRY OUT A HUMAN RIGHTS POLICY THAT I CONSIDER ERROUS AND LACKING SO MUCH UNDERSTANDING ABOUT THE ARGENTINE REALITY."

ASKED WHAT HIS POINTS OF DISAGREEMENT WITH CARTER'S STAND ON HUMAN RIGHTS WERE, HILL ANSWERED THAT CARTER'S POLICY IS "AMBIVALENT AND CONTRADICTORY, SINCE IT APPLIES ECONOMIC AND POLITICAL SANCTIONS TO TRADITIONAL U.S. FRIENDS LIKE ARGENTINA, CHILE AND BRAZIL FOR PRESUMPTIVE VIOLATIONS OF HUMAN RIGHTS BUT DOES NOT CONDEMN CUBA, NORTH VIETNAM OR OTHER TRADITIONAL ENEMIES... CARTER HAS RAISED THE HUMAN RIGHTS BANNER AS THE AXION OF HIS FOREIGN POLICY, AND THAT IS PRAISEWORTHY; BUT THAT IS NOT THE REASON WHY THE AMERICAN PEOPLE VOTED FOR RIML. THEY (THE ADMINISTRATION AND CARTER) WANT TO APPLY MORAL RULES AND IN THE LONG RUN END UP WINNING ENEMIES, AS IF THEY DID NOT UNDERSTAND THE DIFFERENCE BETWEEN HUMAN RIGHTS IN COUNTRIES WITH NO URBAN GUERRILLAS AND THOSE WHERE THIS IS A SERIOUS PROBLEM, AS IS CLEARLY THE CASE WITH ARGENTINA."

ASKED WHY THE U.S. INSISTS ON THIS ATTITUDE TOWARD ARGENTINA, IN SPITE OF THE CONSTRUCTIVE CRITICISM EXPRESSED BY KNOWLEDGEABLE PEOPLE SUCH AS HIGH ARGENTINE OFFICIALS AND HIMSELF, HILL DECLARED "IT IS UNFORTUNATE THAT THE U.S. GOVERNMENT TURNS ITS EYES AND EARS TO THE PRESS, STRONGLY INFLUENCED BY LEFTIST SECTORS, INSTEAD OF TO PEOPLE WITH FIRST-HAND-KNOWLEDGE OF THE SITUATION LIKE HIMSELF." THIS TO HIM IS INCOMPREHENSIBLE. HILL CITES THE CASE OF OLGA TALAMANTEZ AS AN EXAMPLE, FOR HE CAN TESTIFY TO THE EFFECT THAT SHE WAS NOT MISTREATED WHILE IN JAIL IN ARGENTINA ON SUBVERSIVE CHARGES. "SHE WAS NOT

TORTURED OR MISTREATED DURING HER IMPRISONMENT. SHE HERSELF ADMITTED THAT WHEN SHE WAS QUESTIONED BY ARGENTINE NEWSMEN BEFORE BEING TAKEN FROM EZEIZA TO THE U.S. BUT ONCE SHE ARRIVED HERE (IN U.S.) SHE BEGAN TO SAYTHE OPPOSITE, THAT SHE HAD BEEN SUBJECTED TO TORTURE, ABUSE, ETC... THE AMERICAN PRESS USED FALSE TESTIMONY BUT IGNORED A REPORT FROM A RESPONSIBLE AMBASSADOR, WHICH I CONSIDER MYSELF TO BE."

ASKED IF ARGENTINES COULD EXPECT THE TRADITIONAL FRIENDSHIP BETWEEN THE TWO COUNTRIES TO REMAIN UNCHANGED, HILL ANSWERED, "THE RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN ARGENTINA AND THE U.S. HAS ALREADY CHANGED SINCE JANUARY 21, 1977. THERE WILL BE FURTHER COOLING OF RELATIONS IF ECONOMIC SANCTIONS ARE APPLIED.

HOWEVER, IT IS TO BE EXPECTED THAT ONCE THE CONTROVERSY OVER HUMAN RIGHTS IS SOLVED, RELATIONS WILL RETURN TO NORMAL."

WHEN ASKED ABOUT HIS SUCCESSOR AS AMBASSADOR TO ARGENTINA, HILL POINTED OUT THAT HE SUGGESTED TO THE STATE DEPARTMENT A CAREER DIPLOMAT INSTEAD OF A POLITICAL APPOINTEE, ADDING THAT SOMEONE LIKE MR. SALAUDEMAN, PRESENTLY AMBASSADOR TO PERU, WOULD BE A GOOD SELECTION. ASKED EXPRESSLY ABOUT

RAUL CASTRO, HILL REPLIED, "I DON'T KNOW AT LEAST HIS POSITION ON HUMAN RIGHTS IN ARGENTINA DOESN'T SEEM TO BE

MUCH IN ACCORD WITH CARTER'S..." CONCLUDING THE INTERVIEW,

HILL STATED THAT "PERHAPS I'LL WRITE A SERIES OF LONG

ARTICLES TRYING TO CHANGE THE IMAGE THAT THE AMERICAN PRESS HAS OF YOUR COUNTRY."

COPIES OF INTERVIEW BEING FORWARDED BY POUCH TO ARA/ECA.
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Department of State, A/GIS/IPS/SPR

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REMARKS OF

THE HON. ROBERT C. HILL
AMBASSADOR OF THE UNITED STATES
TO ARGENTINA

Copies to
George Chapman
FBI Division
cc: Ric H. Hill
Hill copy for RICZ
*John B. Holmes
W. Holmes*

PRESENTED TO
DIRECTORS AND GUESTS
OF
THE ARGENTINE-AMERICAN CHAMBER OF COMMERCE

AT A LUNCHEON GIVEN IN HIS HONOR
TUESDAY, JUNE 28, 1977
AT
THE METROPOLITAN CLUB
NEW YORK, NEW YORK

~~Department of State, A/GIS/IPS/SRP~~
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IPS by QA Date 10-24-16

Not for release before
12:00 Noon - Tuesday,
June 28, 1977

ARGENTINA TODAY

Over twenty years ago Harold MacMillan described a British Foreign Secretary as a man "forever poised between a cliche and an indiscretion," a description that might as accurately be applied to Ambassadors.

I am not certain that the status of former Ambassador is any guarantee against cliches or indiscretions. However, my intent here today is to speak frankly as a private citizen about a subject of interest to us all -- Argentina and its relations with the United States.

I would like to offer some personal observations based not only on my recent experience in Argentina, but also upon many years of interest and involvement in foreign affairs, keeping in mind that I have been serving the United States since 1944, on and off.

For more than forty-five years, one of Argentina's distinguished features has been the discrepancy between potential and reality, a discrepancy that has mystified foreigners and frustrated Argentines. Seemingly poised on the threshold of social and economic modernization, in the 1930's the country was graced with human and natural resources that led most observers to group Argentina with Canada and Australia and others slated for developed status: Argentina has

instead became a synonym for political instability and economic mismanagement. The nearly twenty presidents since 1930, only two of whom completed constitutionally elected terms: the cyclical boom-bust economic pattern: the intense social and political factionalism: and, most recently, the massive explosion of political violence and hatred have all left deep scars. Understandably, domestic and foreign observers alike continue to wonder whether the country's potential is to remain indefinitely unrealized. I believe the time has come for this realization.

Never was the discrepancy between potential and reality more starkly apparent than during the period from the Peronists' return to power in May 1973 to the going of Mrs. Peron. I viewed most of this period first hand.

Upon Peron's return and subsequent resumption of the presidency in October 1973 after eighteen years in exile, Juan Peron was greeted as a possible solution to their political and economic problems. Within ten months Peron was dead. His wife the successor, Maria Isabel, failed in unprecedented fashion, and the armed forces, so recently harried from the Casa Rosada, once again moved into the seats of power. The hopes of 1973 were dashed. The bitterness was deepened and intensified because expectations had run so high.

A brief catalogue of some of the facts of this period will suggest, I believe, the magnitude of the problems facing Argentina and its military government on March 24, 1976 and help sketch the backdrop against which U.S.-Argentine relations were and have since been conducted.

Any resume of the 1973-77 interlude must focus attention on the impact of terrorism -- the sustained, purposeful use of violence to secure political ends. Violence is not a new phenomenon in Argentine history, or elsewhere in the world.

The post 1969 explosion has been of unprecedented intensity and severity in Argentina.

I would like to recite some of the facts concerning terrorism and suggest what its impact on Argentine society has been.

-- Among the variety of groups that emerged in the late 1960's, the largest and most destructive have been the Montoneros and the People's Revolutionary Army or ERP. Both dominated by Marxist ideology.

-- During peak effectiveness in 1974-76, these two organizations ranked among the effectively trained, financed and most deadly proficient of their kind in the world.

-- Exact numbers are unknown, but a proportionate terrorist threat in the United States would number in the hundreds of thousands.

-- External aid in the form of training, financing and support came from Cuba and other communist sources.

-- Financing came primarily from bank robberies and kidnapping that netted tens of millions of dollars and monies from pro-Marxists abroad.

-- At peak efficiency in 1974-76 they executed mass attacks on military bases and arsenals killing scores of military and civilians.

-- Neither property nor life was secure from the on-slaughter. Victims included businessmen and civilians, both foreign and national; military/police officers; one former President and former Cabinet Ministers; politicians and labor leaders; two Chiefs of the Federal Police, one on his boat with his wife and another in his own bed at the hands of his teenage daughter's best friend. More recently, two attempts have been made on the life of President Videla, one inside the country's largest military garrison, and Foreign Minister Guzzetti was brutally bludgeoned a few days before I left Buenos Aires.

-- Right-wing fanatics also contributed their share to the carnage, responding to the revolutionary left with a murderous campaign of their own.

-- The right-wing anti-communists operated with near impunity prior to the March 24 coup. Anyone identified with Marxist, liberal or leftist causes was considered fair game by

the right.

As for the impact of terrorism on Argentine society beyond the thousands of lost lives and massive property damages, I would like to emphasize two points.

First, the tactics of the revolutionary left called for provoking a military takeover in the belief that repressive military rule would in turn ensure a popular uprising that the left could manipulate and lead into power. The ERP and the Montoneros were not solely responsible for bringing on the March 24th coup, but their violence was a contributing factor.

Second, part of the terrorists' approach to "revolutionizing" society calls for destroying the legal, political, economic and social infrastructure that both reflects and protects the values of a society. By inhibiting the functioning and effectiveness of such institutional bulwarks as the court system, political parties, a free press, and free speech, and by making it impossible for a government to fulfill its fundamental task of guaranteeing life and property, terrorist violence tempts those exercising authority to resort to repression and brute force to maintain order. Here again, it can be argued that the terrorists succeeded in Argentina, aided as they were by the fact that the nation's institutional infrastructure was comparatively weak from the beginning and therefore vulnerable to the terrorists' challenge. It is not by accident, nor is it rhetorical excess when today Argentines in and out of

government emphasize the task of restructuring domestic institutions.

Politically, the 1973-76 period once again exposed the ineptitude of civilian politics. As it turned out, the apparent emergence of a potentially productive national political consensus in 1973 was based on little more than common opposition to military government along with unfounded hopes that the civilians had finally learned their lesson. Instead, the traditional political patterns predominated. In a process that accelerated after Peron's demise in mid-1974, progressively deeper and wider rifts developed within the Peronist movement and between the Peronists and other political factions, and soon most were anticipating a military coup almost as though it was preordained.

National politics became a spectacle symbolized by the nefarious presence and mysterious influence of Social Welfare Minister Jose Lopez Rega. Cabinet positions rotated with revolving-door frequency; opposition leaders wrung their hands and issued dire public statements but seemed paralyzed; and Mrs. Peron gradually forfeited all but the smallest fraction of the public support she enjoyed upon taking office. In the end, the civilian politicians publicly defaulted their claim to leadership by refusing to constitutionally impeach an obviously incompetent chief of state. When the armed forces moved on March 24, 1976, the mourners were few and far between.

Economically, you are perhaps as familiar as anyone with the debacle wrought by the return to Peronist economics. Leaving aside the technical aspects of Peronist policies, it is sufficient to note that, as before 1950, the Peronists concentrated on the distribution rather than the production of wealth in a politically motivated effort to satisfy the demands of the dominant Peronist constituency -- urban organized labor. Excessive and often capricious government controls; marked disincentives in the agricultural sector, Argentina's chief source of foreign exchange; and decreasing foreign investment due to terrorism and the rigidly nationalistic provisions of the 1973 foreign investment law were among the factors that combined to produce

- serious distortion in the domestic relative price structure;
- declining productivity in nearly all sectors
- spiraling inflation; and
- a steadily worsening balance of payments crunch.

A brief statistical profile of the 1975 calendar year reveals the severity of the economic problem:

- GDP (Gross Domestic Product) was off by about 1.5% while per capita GDP declined nearly 3%;
- the fiscal deficit reached an alarming 13% of GDP;
- the cost of living rose 335%;
- The trade deficit was approximately US\$ 1 billion; and
- gross domestic investment fell off over 10%.

By the time of the March coup, all these trends had intensified, and Argentina was almost bankrupt. The wholesale price index sky rocketed by 54% in March alone, and the nation was on the verge of defaulting on international debt obligations for the first time in its history.

Moving to the post-March 1976 period, Argentina, of course, is once again ruled by armed forces. The three man junta consisting of President and Army Commander General Jorge R. Videla, Admiral Massera and Brigadier Agosti is publicly committed to restoring civilian government in Argentina, although probably not in the near future. The record of previous Argentine military governments is enough to make one dubious of success, but the Videla government has scored some notable successes to date and deserves political support and understanding at this crucial time in their history.

Its energies and resources have been primarily directed at solving what were the two crucial problems on March 24, 1976 -- restoring a measure of economic health and controlling terrorist violence.

In the economic sphere, Argentina's remarkable recuperative powers and the capable hands of Economy Minister Jose Martinez de Hoz have produced noteworthy results. Hewing to a more free-market orientation with the emphasis upon production rather than distribution Martinez de Hoz's policies have

-- secured over a billion dollars in necessary foreign credits and loans, thereby avoiding debt default and advantageously restructuring the nation's debt profile;

- slowed, although not halted, domestic inflation;
- turned around a disastrous balance of payments situation;
- raised exchange reserves to an all time high;
- successfully encouraged the expansion of agricultural production;
- resolved most pending foreign investment disputes and established more liberal criteria for future investors; and
- initiated government withdrawal from a variety of enterprises taken over by previous administrations.

The battle has not been won by any means, and government officials say it may take three years before the effects of the present program can be appreciated. Two continuing soft spots that are worrisome include a disturbingly high fiscal deficit that continues to spur inflation, and the general social impact of the Martinez de Hoz approach. Labor has shouldered an inordinate share of the recovery burden to date, with wages having fallen well over 30% even by conservative estimates. Military government or not, organized labor is still a potent force in Argentina, and it is not clear how long labor will demur if some economic relief is not forthcoming.

As for controlling terrorist violence, the Videla government has enjoyed unquestioned success. Terrorists still bomb and kill sporadically, and it may be a long time until absolutely all terrorist activity is curbed. Nonetheless, the formidable revolutionary armies of two and three years ago are no more. With their leaders dead or outside the country; their membership rolls depleted by perhaps 85%; their arms factories and printing press largely destroyed, and police/military pressure relentless, the terrorists are on the run.

Unfortunately, however, this success has been purchased, in part, at the expense of human rights violations. The Junta and the security forces believe that they are engaged in a war to defend their society and way of life against Marxist subversion. They describe it as a "dirty war" in which tactics are determined by the exigencies of the battle rather than by the niceties of the law. As they view the situation, their national security, their survival as a nation, is at stake, and they are disposed to use whatever means prove necessary to win.

No one knows exactly the extent of the reprisals that have occurred, how many people have "disappeared" or been illegally detained, tortured and murdered. The State Department's report on human rights in Argentina submitted along with the executive's security assistance bill provides some information.

I have portrayed only in broadest outline the Argentina that I have known intimately over the past four years. However sketchy the portrait, I trust that it will stand as an adequate framework for some personal observations on U.S. relations with Argentina and current U.S. foreign policy.

Argentina is a nation in which the following present and potential U.S. interests are worthy of note:

- It is the most advanced nuclear nation in Latin America
- Present U.S. economic interests in Argentina stand at US\$ 1.4 billion in direct private investment and US\$

3 billion in loan exposure by our banks. We also run about a US\$ 250 million annual trade surplus with Argentina.

- As a potential food supplier for a hungry world, Argentina has few equals.
- Some knowledgeable sources believe that Argentina's offshore oil reserves total in the tens of billions of barrels, a startling possibility despite the technical problems inherent in extraction.
- Finally, we should not overlook Argentina's influence in Latin America. It will clearly not be to our advantage if Argentina and its Southern Cone neighbors who are also under human rights pressure decide to respond in concert by forming an anti-U.S. bloc.

Unfortunately, human rights has become the predominant theme in our relations with Argentina, and it is to this subject that I would like to devote the remainder of my remarks. There are actually two questions that deserve attention here, one being the advisability of the human rights stance that has been assumed by President Carter's administration; the other relating to the proper tactics for implementing our human rights policy in Argentina and elsewhere.

I do not question President Carter's decision to accord human rights priority consideration in our foreign affairs. Safeguarding the rights of the individual in society is a deep and abiding concern of President Carter. As Archibald MacLeish phrased it:

"There are those who will say that the liberation of humanity, the freedom of man and mind, is nothing but a dream. They are right. It is the American dream."

However, I have serious reservations about our general human rights policy born of the feeling that it has not been thoroughly thought through in terms of its precise objectives and possible consequences.

If we are primarily concerned with halting abuses of the person such as arbitrary arrest, indefinite imprisonment without trial, torture, and similar practices, then our policy has realizable goals. There is a danger, however, that our human rights impetus will be translated into an effort to export democracy. By progressively broadening the scope of the human rights that the U.S. will pressure other governments to respect, by including a wide range of civil, political and economic rights as some advocates are wont to do, it soon becomes apparent that what we would really be asking other nations to do is make themselves over in our image. This is a well-intentioned approach without doubt, but it ignores the uniqueness of the American experience, the well-established trend toward authoritarianism in the world's emerging nations, and the lessons of our own foreign affairs experience. If there is anything that we should have learned since World War II, it is that democracy is not an exportable commodity.

The consequences of President Carter's human rights thrust are mixed, as might be expected at this early stage in his Administration. Reports of negative developments for dissidents in the Soviet Union and our loss of influence with some governments that we have criticized or sanctioned on human rights grounds must be balanced

against improvements in our image among certain groups abroad and adjustments in terms of human rights practices that some governments have made, publicly or not, to accomodate the U.S. position. The consequences insofar as the impact of human rights on other major policy concerns are not at all clear, although they could be ominous in matters such as Soviet-U.S. relations. The point here is that now that some of the results are in, however, preliminary they may be, it is time for a serious national discussion on the question of centering U. S. foreign policy on human rights. We must not be satisfied with statements that this is what the American people voted for in November 1976. That is simply not true. The campaign did not include much beyond rhetorical expressions concerning human rights and foreign policy.

As for tactics, and here we return to Argentina, the obvious problem is that differing national situations and varying U.S. interests dictate employing different strategies with different countries. But such flexibility on a moral issue like human rights immediately makes the U.S. vulnerable to charges of hypocrisy. Consider for a moment how an Argentine views the U.S. decision to cut military credits to his country while leaving South Korea untouched. To an Argentine battling terrorism and combatting subversion, this says that the U.S. is willing to ignore human rights abuses when and where its own national security is involved, but not when and where the national security of Argentina is at stake.

-- Patience and understanding are what we need to display in the case of Argentina.

-- Patience to see whether elimination of any serious terrorist threat will be accompanied by a termination of the excesses that have attended the struggle.

-- Patience to see whether the moderation of President Videla and his supporters will predominate and make possible a gradual return to civilian government.

-- Patience because what happens in Argentina largely depends not upon what the U. S. does but upon what Argentines do themselves.

The United States should consider its alternative toward Argentina before it embarrasses itself further and humiliates a friend of the United States.

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